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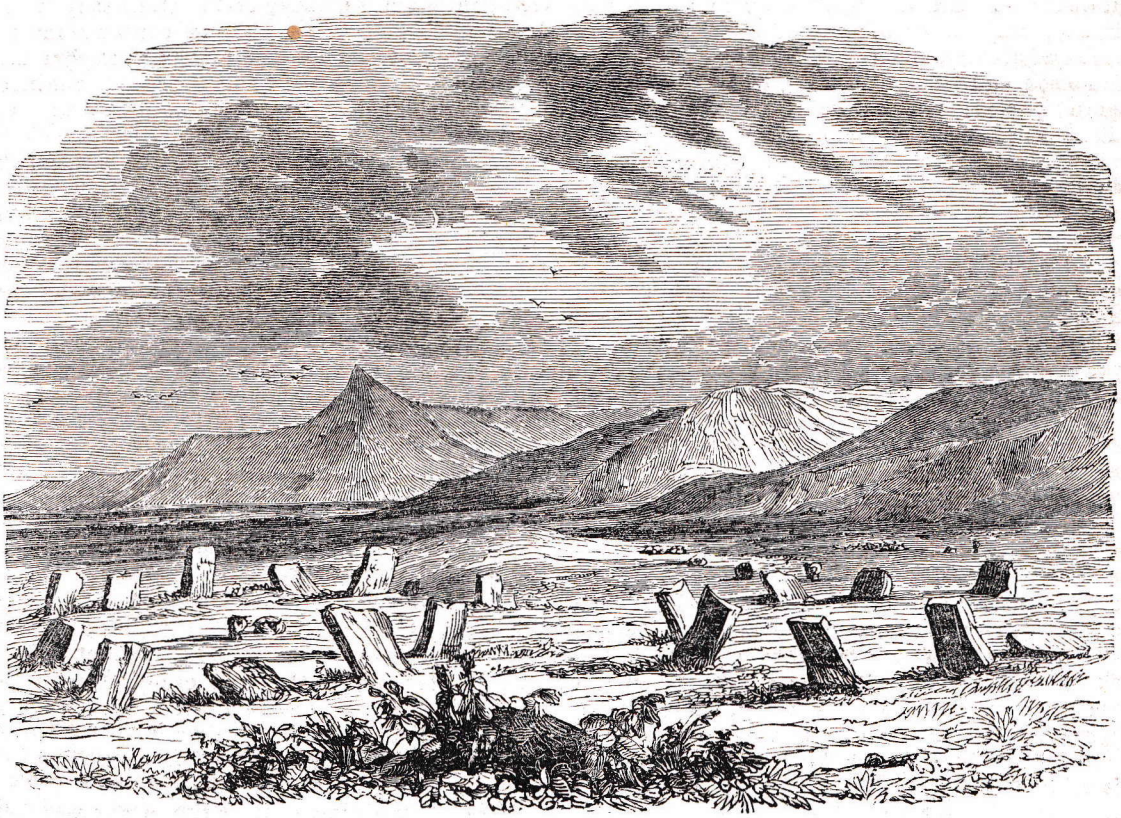
DARTMOOR, DEVONSHIRE.



THE GRAY WETHERS, DARTMOOR.

..... A holy peace
Pervades this moorland solitude—the world,
And all who love that world, are far away!—CARRINGTON.

DEVONSHIRE is one of the most picturesque and romantic portions of our island. Its natural scenery, both maritime and inland, is of the highest order; and combines every variety that can either charm the eye or interest the imagination. The tourist may trace the mountain torrent from its source, brawling over a wild and rugged channel through rocky glens or moorland wastes; or behold it gently meandering through some luxuriant valley, where its fresh and limpid waters diffuse life and loveliness over the softened landscape;—the antiquary may ponder over ruined castles, and mouldering fanes, with their shattered arches and crumbling cloisters, the relics of a former age, or recognise the remnants of a still more remote period, in the semblance of moss-grown cromlechs and fallen columns.

The central part of the western district, extending from the vale of Exeter to the banks of the Tamar, chiefly consists of the very remarkable region called DARTMOOR, a district distinguished in a striking degree from any other in England, and of which we purpose to lay before our readers as full and popular an account as is compatible with the space of the *Saturday Magazine*.

This great "Devonshire Wilderness," or "wild morisch or forest ground," as it is called by Leland, is about twenty miles in length, and of an average breadth of about eleven; stretching in a line from east-north-east, to west-south-west. It contains, according to the latest authority, a superficies of 130,000 acres, affording only a scanty pasturage to sheep and cattle.

The external aspect of this interesting district is extremely wild and dreary, presenting an almost endless continuation of lofty hills, craggy rocks, and narrow valleys strewed with enormous masses of granite, which some convulsion of nature in by-gone days has probably severed from the surrounding eminences. Indeed, innumerable masses of stone of various dimensions lie scattered over the general surface of the Moor, and those which lie on the sides of the hills, are moulded into the wildest and most impressive forms imaginable. Some of these heights rise abruptly into peaks, crowned with huge piles of stone, and are called "Tors." To a person standing on one of these lofty points, the surrounding country wears the appearance of an irregular broken waste, which may be best compared to the long rolling waves of a tempestuous ocean, fixed into solidity by some instantaneous and powerful impulse. Gilpin, in his work on the western parts of Devon, in allusion to this, says that, "Dartmoor spreads like the ocean after a storm, heaving in large swells." Even at a distance, this desolate wilderness has the same billowy

aspect, which in every zone, according to Humboldt, is the prevailing feature of primitive formations.

During the season of Winter, the Dartmoor hills are generally enveloped in fogs and vapours, through which the sun with difficulty penetrates; but in fine weather, their hue is liable to a constant change from sombre gray to a deep azure, owing to the state of the atmosphere, and the alternations of light and shade. One of the most striking features in this dreary region, is the almost total absence of trees and dwellings. An intelligent writer in alluding to this, says, "There is on Dartmoor a stillness, a want of life and activity, and a lofty dignity of expression in its black and barren pastures, which can only be seen in similar ranges of uncultivated lands."

From the numerous remains of round houses—standing singly, but more or less near each other, built in the most primitive manner of unwrought stones without cement, varying in diameter, the largest not exceeding twelve feet—there can be no doubt that Dartmoor and its borders in the early ages were rather thickly inhabited. These edifices are attributed to the ancient Britons: indeed, we have partial confirmation of the surmise from Cæsar, who says that the houses of the Britons were built singly; and the Rev. Mr. Fosbrooke, in his learned dissertation on British Antiquities, gives a representation of a dwelling of this people, which corresponds with the remains on Dartmoor.

There are also several Druidical or Celtic remains on the Moor, as the circles, the logans, and the rock basins abundantly testify. At Drewsteignton, there is a very remarkable logan, or rocking stone, in the rocky channel of the Teign river, but its oscillating powers have nearly ceased. The base or under-stone of this vast mass of granite is deeply set in a bed of rocks, of which, indeed, it forms a part. The logan stone is of irregular shape, its height, or thickness, varying from six or seven to ten feet; its length is about eighteen feet; the top flattish. When rocked, it is said to have emitted an audible murmur of a peculiarly awful nature. The scenery around this monument of a remote age, is of uncommon grandeur. There are one or two other logan stones in the same neighbourhood, but of less dimensions. The only cromlech on the Moor, is at Shilston, near Drewsteignton, which bears the name of the Spinster's Rock, from an absurd tradition that three spinsters, or unmarried damsels, constructed it one morning for their amusement before breakfast. Chappell considers this cromlech as a druidical place of judicature, or perhaps intended for astronomical purposes. On the higher part of Dartmoor are two circles called the "Gray Wethers," from their fancied resemblance, at a short distance, to sheep. They are situated directly under Sittafond Tor, and consist of thirty stones, each varying from three to five feet in height, and from seven to nine feet apart, according to their size. Not more than half of them are erect, some being thrown down, and others removed. Both circles are sixty feet in diameter. Barrows, or ancient graves, are common on several of the downs, and on Quarnell Down in particular, there is a barrow ninety-four paces in circumference. Some of these ancient places of sepulture have been opened, but only fragments of bones and urns were found.

Dartmoor gives rise to a large number of rivers and mountain-streams: the scenery on some is very peculiar, and in many respects almost unequalled in interest and beauty, particularly in the wilder and more secluded parts of the region, and in the vicinity of the coast. The principal rivers are the Dart, (which imparts its name to the Moor,) the Teign, Tavy, Taw, and Plym, which all take their rise in the northern quarter of the district, chiefly from a range of hills called Cranmere; and, with the exception of the Taw, travel southward towards the British Channel, and give their names at their embouchures, to several ports and watering-places, some of which are of considerable importance.

The numerous brooks and torrent streams of the Moor also rank among its distinguishing features. As the country is one continued slope from its highest elevation to the sea, many of the streams rush with headlong fury, along deep and shadowy ravines, mountainous elevations rising in frowning grandeur over the tumultuous waters at their feet, which, all wildness and power, hasten on to mingle with the ocean beyond, or unite with some stately river. There are in Dartmoor, or on its immediate borders, not fewer than five principal rivers, twenty-four secondary rivers, fifteen brooks, two lakes, and seven heads; or, altogether, fifty-three streams. This superabundance of water is occasioned by the spongy nature of the land, which retains the heavy showers that so frequently fall in the western counties, until the waters in the extensive morasses gradually overflow. In this manner, and from almost as small beginnings, do some of the most mighty rivers in the world take their rise, and are evidences of the many and ever bountiful provisions which the all-wise, and supreme Author of nature has furnished for the use and benefit of His creatures. The roaring of the various torrents of water in the Moor, after heavy rains, and when the wind favours the transmission of the sound, is very grand, and especially striking to those who have never heard this impressive music in this "wild and wondrous region."

One of the peculiarities of Dartmoor and the surrounding country, are the TORS, or as they are called by the native poet of the district, with a poet's license, "Mighty Tors." The word *tor* implies, in the Celtic and other languages, a beacon or fire-tower, and some of these hills were formerly used for this purpose. There are none that rise to any very lofty altitude, Rippen Tor, which is considered amongst the highest, being only 1549 feet above the level of the ocean, an elevation not greatly exceeding that of the Malvern Hills in Worcestershire.

Hey, or High Tor, is perhaps the most remarkable of the series, and when illumed by the rising sun, its rocky summits may be distinguished at an amazing distance. It consists of a double peak, or two large but separate columns, with steps cut in the solid stone for ascending each; and from the summit there is a magnificent view of the coast, stretching to the east as far as the cliffs of Dorset, and embracing on almost every point of the compass, a rich and diversified mass of heath, woods, rocks, meadows, rivers, towns, and villages. This tor is celebrated for its peat or blackwood, and the rarity of its mosses and lichens. Some of the tors are supposed by geologists to be extinct volcanoes; but this is not supported by facts, though the conical form of several might perhaps warrant that conclusion. In the seventy-fifth volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, it is asserted that Bren Tor, near Tavistock, has a volcanic origin; and looking at its conical form, and the porous nature of the rock which composes it, there may be some grounds for the supposition. Crockern Tor, so well known to antiquaries, at least by name, stands about a mile distant from a place called Two Bridges, in the east quarter of the Moor, of which it is considered by some to be the centre. The president, or judge's chair, part of the bench for the jurors, and three irregular steps for ascend-

ing, are still partially visible, and as an interesting relic of old British manners, and a memorial of the Saxon *Witenagemot*, or earlier parliament of the realm, must always command respect.

In the valley of the Cad, near Shaugh Bridge, rising perpendicularly from the margin of the stream, is a remarkable cliff, or mass of rock, called the *Dewerstone*. The surface is profusely overgrown with thick and variegated underwood, consisting of ivy and other parasitical plants, which spread their luxuriant foliage over its jagged and shattered front, as if anxious to bind up the wounds that time and tempest have inflicted. The view from the summit into the awful depth beneath, is very impressive.

Shaugh Bridge crosses the river Plym a short distance below the junction of that river with the Cad.

> . . . . . How oft, as noon
> Unnoticed faded into eve, my feet
> Have lingered near thy bridge, romantic Shaugh;
> While, as the sister waters rushed beneath,
> Tumultuous, haply glanced the setting beam
> Upon the crest of Dewerstone. The hawk
> Rested upon the aged cliff;—around
> A holy silence reigned;—the mountain's breast,
> Lay hushed as midnight;—not a vagrant gale
> Sighed through the woods of Plym, and on the soul
> Fell deep the impressive calm.—Carrington.

The scenery of the Plym is of extreme beauty, and ranks amongst the finest in the kingdom. In consequence of the number of rivers and streams which flow through Dartmoor, nearly one hundred and fifty bridges have necessarily been erected by the county at various periods.

A Railway between Prince Town and Sutton Pool, near Plymouth, a distance of more than twenty-five miles, was opened for public use in September, 1823, at a cost of 39,983*l.*, raised principally by the influence of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, who subscribed upwards of 3000*l.* towards the undertaking. The railway was projected by the same spirited individual in the beginning of the year 1818. A company was subsequently formed, and incorporated as the Plymouth and Dartmoor Railway Company. Immense quantities of granite of the finest quality are conveyed on it, and shipped for London and other large towns.

Prince Town, a small place containing about thirty houses, so called in honour of his late majesty, when Prince of Wales, is worthy of notice, as being the site of Dartmoor Prison, where, during the late war, a great number of prisoners were confined. From May 29, 1809, to April 22, 1814, no less than 12,679 unhappy victims were incarcerated there; about 1117 deaths occurred during that period, of which 1095 were French, and twenty-two Americans. This immense and remarkable structure is exceedingly well adapted for the object designed. Elevated at least 1400 feet above the sea, it comprises within its walls a circumference of thirty acres, enclosed on its eastern, northern, and southern directions, by a lofty wall, and on the western part, or front, which being straight, blunts the circumference, by two handsome residences appropriated to the agent and surgeon, and having between them a Cyclopean gateway, surmounted with the motto, "*Parcere subjectis.*"

Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt, the originator of the railway, first suggested the idea to government, and as the prisons at Plymouth had become old and inconvenient, it was determined to erect this building from the plan of Mr. Alexander. The first stone was laid in March, 1806. The edifice is principally composed of the granite so plentiful on the Moor, and was completed at a cost of about 127,000*l.* A portion of the building, comprising two of the prisons, the dwellings for the inferior officers, and the walls of the chapel and parsonage-house, were erected by French, and the interior of the chapel was fitted up by the American prisoners, who were paid a daily sum for this labour; a mode of employment which tended to alleviate the tedium of their captivity, and increase their comforts. The various parts of the prison were thoroughly supplied with excellent water from an inexhaustible reservoir filled by a branch of the river Walkham, diverted for that purpose.

The air of Dartmoor is exceedingly healthful and invigorating; one proof of which is to be found in the fact, that the "Moorsmen," as they are locally termed, are famed for feats of strength, especially wrestling. Many of the inhabitants attain a great age. The farmers lead a very laborious life in cultivating the barren lands in the vicinity of their habitations; nevertheless, they seem happy and contented with their lot, and, as is generally the case in all wild and moorland districts, they appear greatly attached to the soil which gave them birth. Many of the cottagers maintain themselves by digging peat fuel from the extensive bogs, which is chiefly sent to that district of the county termed "the south hams." Others job in cattle, and drive a humble trade in garden produce, &c.

Dartmoor, in former days, particularly when covered in a greater or less degree with wood, is said to have abounded with wolves, boars, badgers, and other wild animals. The wolf was not extinct in Dartmoor, according to Howel, even so late as the reign of Elizabeth. Wild cattle, similar to the aboriginal species preserved in Chillingham Park, Northumberland, formerly abounded. The red deer and stag have now nearly abandoned it, the former being chiefly to be met with in the north of Devon. In the time of Henry the Third the stag was common. Foxes, hares, and rabbits, are still very numerous. The moor-horse, or more properly pony, is an active little animal, but seems to be left almost entirely in a state of nature.

Some writers have supposed that Dartmoor, in the old time, was luxuriantly covered with wood, and, indeed, at various periods the trunks, branches, and roots of trees, chiefly oak and birch, have been discovered in several parts, at different depths from the surface of the ground, some even so low as six or eight feet. The wood, from its contact with the marshy soil, is black, and after exposure for a time to the sun and air, becomes exceedingly hard. The solitary remains of the forest called the Wood of Wistman, so beautifully alluded to by Carrington, as "Dreary in aspect, silently decaying," stands on a slope, near the West Dart, to the north-east of Crockern Tor. It consists of scrubbed decrepit trees, chiefly oak, scarcely exceeding seven feet in height; their branches almost destitute of foliage, overrun with moss, brambles, and other parasitical plants, exhibit a scene of uncouth and cheerless desolation. The circumference of some of these hoary foresters almost equals their height. Wordsworth truly says,—

> I looked upon the scene, both far and near,
> More doleful place did never eye survey;
> It seemed as if the spring time came not here,
> Or nature here was willing to decay.

Several laudable attempts, on a large scale, have been made at various periods to plant and improve Dartmoor, and it is extremely probable that it will be ultimately enclosed. A recent writer observes,—

What has been effected affords a manifest proof, not only of considerable attendant advantages, but of the perfect practicability of doing more. In the wastes surrounding the moor barrenness is gradually disappearing, and softening into verdure and fertility. By judicious measures

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sterility might be wholly banished, excepting where the peat earth lies immediately upon the granite rock. The soil of the neighbouring vales is of superior quality, and consists of rich friable loams; and even on the moor itself are spots forming oases, as it were, in a desert, and highly susceptible of useful conversion.

The same writer says,—

That the moor was once cultivated is evident, from the traces of furrows or ridges, and stone inclosures, still remaining upon and around it, and from the lower layers of thatch in the roofs of its old buildings being rye-straw, which probably was the grain then raised.

NOTES ON FOREST TREES. No. XXV.

THE HAZEL, (*Corylus avellana.*)

THIS well-known tree seldom exceeds twenty feet in height, and from its mode of growth and size may be called indiscriminately a small tree or a large shrub. It appears to be a native of all the temperate portions of Europe and Asia.

The south of Spain produces great quantities of hazel nuts, which are exported in considerable numbers to other parts of the Continent, particularly from the port of Barcelona, by which name all the Spanish nuts are known. It seems to have been looked upon by the ancients more in reference to the superstitious practices in which it was employed, than on account of its useful properties. Pliny says torches were made of its branches at marriages, the burning of which was supposed to be *lucky* to the young couple. In more recent times advantage has been taken of the folly of mankind by its employment for the purpose of discovering metals, water, hidden treasure, lost property, &c., by means of a *divining rod** formed of a twig of Hazel. The impositions that have been practised by designing persons by the aid of this instrument are almost incredible, and even at present it has not fallen entirely into disuse.

* See *Saturday Magazine*, Vol. IX., p. 36.

"The Hazel," says Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, "which, besides making up a prominent part of many a grove in the happiest manner, and tufting and fringing the sides of many a ravine, often presents us with very picturesque stems and ramifications. Then when we think of the lovely scenes into which the careless steps of our youth have been led in search of its nuts, when Autumn had begun to brown the tops of their clusters, we are bound to it by threads of the most delightful associations with those beloved ones who were the companions of such idle but happy days."

The Hazel appears to flourish in almost all descriptions of soil, but it succeeds best, and its fruit is larger and finer flavoured, in a light and moist earth. It is extremely hardy, and its blossoms appear very early in the Spring, even if the weather is severe. The stem is surrounded with numerous young shoots, which offer a very easy method of propagating the tree. But it may be grown from the seed; in this case, the nuts should be put into the ground in the Autumn, soon after they are gathered, and the young plants will appear in the next Spring. If the sowing of the nut is left until the Spring, they must be preserved through the Winter in dry sand, to prevent their becoming rancid; the trees reared in this last manner are much more vigorous, and acquire a greater height than those produced from suckers.

The fruit of the common nut is thought but little of, but the filbert, which is merely a larger variety produced by cultivation, is considered worthy of a place in the dessert. The wood of the Hazel when young is extremely flexible, and in some places it is much used in the manufacture of baskets. Nut-oil is expressed from the kernel of the Hazel nut, and is sometimes employed for the same purpose as olive-oil: it is also used by painters in oil colours, but the greater proportion of oil sold for this purpose as nut-oil, is merely a refined linseed-oil.

LEAVES, CATKINS, AND FRUIT OF THE HAZEL.